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*Zathorax*, *Physopyxis*, *Otocinclus* and *Pariolius*. A genus (*Characidium*) previously only known by one small species from a Brazilian coast stream, has its range greatly extended by the discovery of a species in the Ambyiacu.

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## GEOLOGY.

AURORA ISLAND.—With reference to the alleged disappearance of Aurora Island, one of the New Hebrides group, to which we alluded some weeks since on the authority of a paper read before the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, a correspondent of the "Shipping and Mercantile Gazette" affirms that the whole story is a fable. The original statement rested on a notice by Captain Plock, of the French ship *Adolphe*, bound from Iquique to London, that he passed over the position of the Iles de l'Aurore, as marked on his French chart of the South Atlantic, and saw nothing of them, from which he concluded that they had disappeared. It appears, however, that the Iles de l'Aurore (Aurora Islands) never existed. They were formerly placed between lat.  $52^{\circ} 38'$  and  $53^{\circ} 15'$  S., and between long.  $47^{\circ} 43'$  and  $47^{\circ} 57'$  W., of Greenwich. The first reporters of the islands probably saw icebergs in the given locality, and mistook their character. Aurora Island, in the New Hebrides group, has been confounded with the Aurora Island in the Paumotu, Tuamotu, or Low Archipelago. Aurora, Makatea, or Metia Island, lat.  $15^{\circ} 50'$  S., long.  $148^{\circ} 13'$  W., one of the Low Archipelago, has not been visited for some time, but its elevation would lead to the inference that it could not disappear suddenly; it is fertile and inhabited. This is the island visited by Wilkes, and on which the unique specimens of mollusca were found. It is upwards of 2,500 miles eastward of the New Hebrides.—*Nature*.

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## ANTHROPOLOGY.

SUPPOSED MEXICAN IDOL.—We have received from Dr. C. U. Shepard, jr., a stereoscopic view of an idol made of Mexican lava, presented to him by a Mr. Toomer of Charleston, S. C. The image is about three and a half inches high, and is at present deposited in the collection of Prof. Shepard, sr., at Amherst College, Mass. The image was said to have been found a few inches

under ground by a child, and Dr. Shepard was told that arrow-heads have been found in that neighborhood, but he was unable to obtain any. The locality, where the idol was found, is a swampy tract some twelve to fifteen miles southwest of Sommerville, and from thirty to thirty-five miles from Charleston.

An eminent archæologist to whom we submitted the photograph considers this as undoubtedly a Mexican idol, and threw out the suggestion that it might have been brought by some soldier from Mexico during the Mexican war.

THE QUISSAMA TRIBE OF ANGOLA.—At a meeting of the Anthropological Institute (May 29), Mr. F. G. H. Price read a paper on this tribe, which inhabit that portion of Angola situated on the south bank of the Quanza river. The country had lately been visited by Mr. Charles Hamilton, well known for his travels among the Kaffirs. The Quissama bear the reputation of being cannibals, but cannibalism, although undoubtedly practised by them to some extent, does not largely prevail. The men are well formed, and average about five feet, eight inches in height, they are copper-colored, have long, coarse, and in some instances, frizzled hair; their heads are mostly well developed, and the Roman nose is not unfrequently met with. Their weapons are spears, bows and arrows, and occasionally guns, the latter being rude copies from the Portuguese article. Mr. Hamilton was well received by the chief, who told him that he was the first white man who had seen the tribe at home. The men and women of the Quissama are addicted to hunting; they are virtuous, practice monogamy, marry young, and are very prolific. The men largely preponderate in numbers over the women, the result, it is supposed, of infanticide, but of that practice Mr. Hamilton had seen no evidence. The Quissama believe in the existence of a Supreme Being.—*Nature*.

THE PATAGONIANS.—A paper was also read at a meeting of the Anthropological Institute by Lieut. George C. Musters, R.N., on the races of Patagonia inhabiting the country between the Cordillera and the Atlantic, which the author had traversed during the years 1869 and 1870. The Patagonians consist of three races distinctly differing in language and physique, and partially differing in religion and manners, Tehuelches or Patagonians, Pampas and Manzaneros, the latter being an offshoot of the Araucanians of Chile. The Tehuelches and Pampas are nomadic tribes subsisting

almost entirely by the chase. The proverbial stature of the Patagonians was so far confirmed by the observation that the Tehuelches give an average height of five feet ten inches, with a corresponding breadth of shoulders and muscular development; the Manzaneros come next in order of height and strength, the Pampas being the smallest of the three races. The Manzaneros are remarkable for their fair complexions, while the Tehuelches are, literally speaking, Red Indians. Lieut. Musters had visited all the various tribes of those races, from the Rio Negro to the Straits of Magellan, for political purposes, and he estimated the population, which he described as diminishing, as follows:—Tehuelches 1,400 to 1,500, Pampas 600, and the remainder Manzaneros, amounting in all to about 3,000.—*Nature*.

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### MICROSCOPY.

THE FOOT OF DYTISCUS AND THE FLY.—Mr. B. T. Lowne (in a paper read before the Royal Microscopical Society, London, May 3, 1871), gives a very interesting and conclusive study of this familiar and interesting object. The tarsi of the anterior feet of the males are furnished with some two hundred sucker-like disks, one of which is about one-sixteenth of an inch wide, another a thirty-second of an inch, and the rest one hundred and fiftieth of an inch each. These disks, more properly called pulvilli, are evidently designed for purposes of adhesion, and being believed by the majority of persons to act by atmospheric pressure, are popularly called suckers. They are evidently comparable to the pulvilli of many insects. The tarsi of some diamond beetles are furnished with tubular, bulbous hairs whose bases open into a gland in the tarsus, a viscid fluid from which fills the hair and exudes through the walls of the bulb. In flies the same structure is found, except that the minute organs are furnished, instead of bulbs, with flattened disks, which, by bearing an equal strain support the individual, though they are easily removed from their attachment by the insect, which separates one row at a time. In the male *Dytiscus* we observe an extraordinary modification of the same organs; the tarsus being mainly occupied by a large, glandular sac, into which open, by apertures visible under the microscope, the columella of the so-called suckers. These “suckers” are disk-bearing hairs, greatly modified in size but little in struct-